

NIOSH ISSUES REPORT ASSESSING POTENTIAL FOR RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION AT NUCLEAR WEAPONS FACILITIES

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) prepared a final report to Congress that assesses the potential for residual contamination from radioactivity and beryllium at atomic weapons employer facilities and beryllium vendor facilities. The report assesses whether contamination might have persisted in dust or other residue at the facilities after weapons-related operations ended at the facilities following the end of the Cold War. The report was released on November 7, 2003, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Atomic weapon employer facilities are sites that were owned by private contractors during the Cold War era, where materials were processed for or used in the production of nuclear weapons. Beryllium vendor facilities are sites that were owned or operated by private companies, where beryllium was produced, processed, or otherwise used for the production of nuclear weapons.

The report was based on a NIOSH examination of more than 60,000 pages of documents from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Worker Advocacy and other sources. NIOSH conducted the study pursuant to an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002. The scope of the report, including the sites studied, was set forth in the amendment.

The report completes the work that NIOSH was directed to perform under the amendment. The report is available for downloading from the NIOSH web page at www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/pdfs/tbd/fnlrcr.pdf and from the NIOSH Office of Compensation Analysis and Support (OCAS) at 513-533-6800 or via email at ocas@cdc.gov

What did the study find?

It found that some atomic weapons employer and beryllium sites have little potential for significant residual contamination, some have the potential for significant residual contamination, and some have insufficient documentation for making a determination. Nothing in the findings suggests that a current, unrecognized occupational or public health hazard exists at any of these facilities. The full list of sites is included in the report.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



What prompted the request for the study?

The amendment reflected interest in determining if employees at the atomic weapons employer and beryllium sites may have been exposed to residual contamination after weapons-related operations ended. Under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA), claimants may file for compensation for cancer and beryllium disease that they believe was caused by job-related exposures while working at the facilities. The Act limits eligibility to employees who worked at the atomic weapons employer facilities during the time in which materials were processed or used for nuclear weapons.

Do the findings of the report suggest whether EEOICPA should be amended by Congress to cover work by employees at the atomic weapons employer and beryllium facilities after nuclear weapons production ended?

No, NIOSH was not asked to address that question.

Who would determine whether EEOICPA should be amended?

Any decisions on amendments to EEOICPA would be made by Congress.